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Review of the international drug control regime: strengthening United Nations machinery for drug control

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit herewith the joint statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly at its twentieth special session.

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Joint statement of the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly at its twentieth special session

1. We, the executive heads of the organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, are pleased to take this opportunity to bring to the attention of the General Assembly our shared commitment to reduce and prevent the illicit production, sale, demand, trafficking and distribution of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances, to strengthen sustainable development and to achieve better allocation of resources.

2. This commitment was affirmed during the first 1995 session of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, when we expressed strong support for concerted action and agreed on a number of steps to be taken. As a result, we have undertaken measures to develop not only coordination, but real collaboration, having consulted one another, both formally and informally, and having examined drug-related implications of our work, especially at the field level. In several seriously affected countries, thematic groups are now instrumental in joint programming, thereby interlinking our respective activities. Under the auspices of the Administrative Committee on Coordination Subcommittee on Drug Control, our agencies have engaged in the elaboration of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Drug Abuse Control, based on sub-sectoral plans of action. This policy framework, built upon shared objectives and analyses of the problems, illustrates the extent to which we can each contribute to the fight against drug abuse and, by doing so, how our individual mandates are better served.

3. Given that the global and multifaceted nature of the drug problem necessitates a holistic and balanced approach, we firmly believe that the United Nations system is well placed to offer a wide range of expertise, which can be drawn upon to create synergies among our agencies. We are determined to strengthen our effectiveness in overcoming the impediments to sustainable social and economic development that drug abuse entails and to reaffirm our commitment to collaborate closely with the United Nations International Drug Control Programme, which has been entrusted with the responsibility of coordinating all United Nations drug control activities.

4. Within the context of reform of the United Nations and the strengthening of the resident coordinator system, we stress the importance of including drug-related issues in the planning of assistance programmes in the context of country strategy notes and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. The ongoing reform process offers an opportunity to reassess and intensify our contribution to drug control, while at the same time streamlining the efficiency of the United Nations system.

5. Many of the cross-cutting issues that the United Nations system addresses, some of which have been the subject of major international conferences in the 1990s, have drug control implications. In this connection, we recognize the necessity of incorporating the gender perspective in all our assistance programmes. We are resolved to take the drug control dimension into consideration in planning and executing our own activities. Specifically:

(a) We are committed to the overriding development goal of eliminating poverty worldwide and recognize the relevance of alternative development programmes in achieving this goal in zones of illicit cultivation. We shall, therefore, encourage the inclusion, when appropriate, of alternative development measures in United Nations system programmes directed by the resident coordinators to promote sustainable development, and look forward to contributing to the global strategy for the elimination of illicit crops and to mobilizing

national and international resources to support alternative development measures essential to the effectiveness of those programmes;

(b) We strongly support the emphasis given to drug demand reduction, including prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, welcome the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and commit ourselves to work together to prevent related problems in schools, the family, the workplace and the community as a whole, including through education and training;

(c) The human immunodeficiency virus/acquired immunodeficiency syndrome (HIV/AIDS) epidemic has several implications for, and is an additional burden to, the economic and social development of countries. The United Nations system as a whole is committed to coordinating and accelerating programming to contain the epidemic, to reduce its impact and to address HIV/AIDS issues related to drug abuse, as it is now recognized that intravenous drug use plays a critical role in the spread of the HIV epidemic in various regions;

(d) Addressing the needs of children and youth, especially those in need of special protection measures, is a priority. Committed to the terms of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we are encouraged by the joint efforts already under way to provide shelter, health care, education and economic opportunities to this important segment of society and recognize that young people constitute a key resource in efforts to prevent drug abuse. Programmes to reduce demand for drugs should be part of a comprehensive strategy to reduce demand for all abusive substances. We acknowledge and support the "Charter of Young People for a Twenty-first Century Free of Drugs", adopted in Paris in February 1998;

(e) The renewed effort of the United Nations system to interface with civil society is an important component in the current reform of the United Nations. The work of voluntary organizations and other groups of civil society to prevent drug abuse through education at the community level calls for our wholehearted support. The role of the media and the Internet are indispensable in this regard;

(f) Supply reduction activities are also steps towards protection of the environment, as the illicit cultivation and production of drugs can have alarmingly detrimental environmental effects, including clearance of tropical forests and river pollution. The political will, commitment and collaboration of various agencies is essential in order to maximize the impact of action in this field;

(g) There are strong links between drug control and the fight against organized transnational crime, as well as between drug trafficking and the trafficking in human beings. We therefore welcome the decision of the Secretary-General to create the Office for Drug Control and Crime Prevention. We also recognize the crucial role of anti-money-laundering policies and legislation in support of the fight against drug trafficking;

(h) Similarly, the issue of corruption is also linked to drug control. We are all committed to the task of promoting good governance and creating and enhancing professionalism, integrity and ethical values in public service as a means of fighting corruption. We therefore welcome drug control efforts to that end;

(i) In the context of peace-building in conflict and post-conflict situations, we agree to take the drug dimension fully into account in the strategic planning of rehabilitation programmes, so that lasting peace, reconstruction and development can be achieved.

6. In reaffirming our commitment as members of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, we welcome this occasion as an opportunity for Member States to renew their own commitment to the global fight against illicit drugs. We also appeal to Member States, both individually and collectively, to support our efforts with the political will and resources commensurate to the daunting challenge ahead.